Council Chamber, City Hall, London.
March 8th, 1920.

WESTERN ONTARIO HOUSING COMMISSION ASSOCIATION.

A MEETING OF DELEGATES FROM CERTAIN MUNICIPALITIES SURROUNDING LONDON, meets in the Council Chamber, City Hall, London, on Monday, March 8th, 1920, at 2.20 p.m. for the purpose of considering Housing matters.

PRESENT: Messrs. J.L.Lodge, St. Thomas, R.A.Sutherland, St. Thomas, J.S.McQueen, Tillsonburg, M.J.Wilkins, Tillsonburg, M.A.Penhald, St. Thomas, C.H.Denton, Tillsonburg, John McIntyre, Tillsonburg, J.O.Fletcher, Ontario Housing Inspector, Ben Gale, Woodstock, W.G.Owens, Stratford, J.Feedstone Ingersoll, G.M.Mason, Ingersoll, J.H.Laughton, London, C.E.Clements, Chatham, W.Scarlett, London, W.J.Bugler, London, W.E.Gundy, Windsor, Alderman Brighton, London, S.Grant, London, J.McBridg, London, G.N.Weekes, London, A.M.Piper, London, E.R.Dennis, London, Roy McEachren, McEachren, Housing, Norman C.McEachren, Toronto, J.W.Knowles, Sarnia, W.E.Dodd, London, and A.Durney, St. Marys., and Ex-Mayor Buchanan, Ingersoll.

Mr. E.R.Dennis, (Chairman) of the Local Housing Commission called the meeting to order and introduced Alderman Brighton to welcome the delegates on behalf of His Worship Mayor Little who was unavoidably absent.

Alderman Brighton referred to the necessity for increased housing accommodation, and the many difficulties connected therewith, and assured the representatives of the welcome of the City, and hoped that their discussions would be helpfull.

Mr. Dennis referred to this section as one of the most fertile, populous, and industrious, of the whole Dominion, and spoke of the services of Mr. J.A.Ellis Housing Director with the highest appreciation of his inestimable value to the Housing scheme and suggested the need of a deputation to waiton the Government respecting the policy for the year, as regards Housing. He believed that the Government would be fair and listen favorably to any reasonable extension of the Housing policy, and suggested the following matters for general discussion:

The posibility of any temporary means for immediate relief.

Problems precipitated by the sharp advance in building costs.

The question of increasing the permissible value of houses for loan purposes, which is now $3,600 and $4,000.

The question as to how far the commissions are justified in proceeding with the programs in view of the high cost of building.

An inquiry into the prevailing costs of building materials and the probability of an advance or a drop in prices.

The euastion as to what are the most economical materials to use in building and the cheapest and best method of operation of the commissions.

What can the large manufacturers do to best assist the commissions in co-operation with the work?

ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

Charles E.Clements, of Windsor, was elected chairman of the round-table conference which followed Mr. Dennis' address. He confirmed the opinion that the Government was considering a policy of retrenchment. He had been told by a minister that the policy would likely be changed so that cities would issue debentures for housing purposes instead of the province.

R.H.Hessell, a member of the local housing commission, pointed out that the housing act was designed to benefit rural communities as well as urban.He thought that most rural communities had been too backward to take advantage of it.

J.H.Laughton thought the Government would be open to conviction on any matters of this kind, and representations as to the necessity of the work would be worth while.

Mr. Hessell said that if settled conditions were to be obtained something must be done to satisfy the needs of the workers. They wanted an honest and fair change to live in comfortable homes. He claimed that the reason farmers could not get help was because they would not furnish good enough housing accommodation.

Mr. Dennis said the benefits of a housing plan were not confined to an individual, but were felt by the whole community.

Representatives of the various municipalities dealt with housing conditions as they had found them.

Mr. Dennis moves, and it is adopted, that a resolution committee be appointed to consider, and submit resolutions along the lines suggested in the Round Table Conference, consisting of Messrs. Hessell, of London, W.E.Gundy, Windsor, C.H.Denton, Tillsonburg, A.Durney, St. Marys, J.L.Lodge, St. Thomas and H.Mason of Ingersoll.

Mr. Hessell, seconded by Mr. Denton, moves, and it is adopted, that this meeting approve of the establishment of a Housing Association

for Western Ontario.

Upon motion the first session of the Round Table Conference adjourned to visit the Patricia Theatre at 5 p.m. and the Tecumseh House for luncheon at 6 p.m.

RICTURES SHOWN.

At the close of the afternoon session the delegates visited the Patricia Theatre, where a film, showing the construction of houses in Walkerville by the McEachren Housing Company, was shown. There homes are really beautiful.

The delegates were entertained at a banquet in the Tecumseh House at 6 o'clock last evening. George M. Reid, president of the Chamber of Commerce, welcomed them to the City. There was no question but what the whole country was needing houses, he said. There was also no question that in the old days the men in the building trades had not been paid reasonable wages, but their demands were now getting beyond reason. Because of conditions like this, he pointed out, it was unreasonable for people to expect houses now for the same price as before the war.

Norman McEachren, of the firm of the W.N.McEachren Building Corporation of Toronto, was another speaker. He thought that the new housing commissions were thinking too much of present conditions. Houses built now should last for thirty or forty years and the builders must look that far ahead. While there might be disadvantages in carrying out the plans now, these would be more than offset by the good conditions which would result in the next generation. He thought that the workingmen had had a just grievance in the past and did not blame them for getting all they could now. If they were treated properly their viewpoint would change.

Houses now being built were too large, he asserted. Of 400 houses erected in one City by his firm, it was found that the kitchen was being used for general purposes in 82 per cent of them. In 18 per cent, the sitting-room was in use, but the parlor was not. In many cases, it was not furnished. The average cost of a room was $500 which totalled $600, which the workman paid to no advantage.

The speaker urges a broad and optimistic outlook, declaring that the day was not far distant when there would be a population of five million in this section of the country. The city should develop from within and produce ideal conditions. Affording plenty of opportunity for local factories to grow was even better than obtaining new industries. However, if conditions here were made ideal the new firms would come of their own accord.

Mr. McEachren claimed that the housing act prepared by Sir William Hearst had never performed its proper function, and had been badly muddled in the Legislature.

He asserted that the commission appointed to investigate housing conditions had sent out plans of English houses. These were entirely unsuitable for this climate, but it was on these as a basis that the province was asked to spend $10,000,000. Lack of leadership in the housing matter, he claimed, was the great trouble, and he urged as a remedy for this that each municipality form its own housing association.

The speaker suggested that local manufacturers subscribe 15 per cent of the amount necessary and that bonds for the remaining 85 per cent be guaranteed by the municipality. They would then be free from municipal direction and would not be dependent on the Government. The whole plan should be on a business basis and not a cost basis, he stated. If the City got into unfair competition with local builders it would soon find that none of them would take up the work. The purchasers should pay market value. The amount above cost could go into a reserve fund to provide for depreciation and similar contingencies.

He was opposed to higher amounts being loaned. "Five thousand dollars is too much for a workingman to pay for a house," he said. He believed the solution to the whole problem could be found in the 1914 housing act with a few amendments.

Tecumseh House, London,
March 8th, 1920.

The Delegation present resumed session in the Board of Trade room, Tecumseh House, at 7.15 p.m.

Mr. Clements of Chatham in the Chair.

Mr. Hessell submitted the report of the resolution Committee, viz:

The Committee on resolutions begs to submit their report as follows, and recommends the adoption of same, viz:-

I. CONSTITUTION.

1. NAME.

This Association shall be called the Western Ontario Housing Commission Association." and shall consist of the Municipal Housing Commissions who may desire to become members thereof.

(2) OBJECTS.

The objects of the Association are:-

(1) To consider matters of general interest to Housing Commissions of the municipalities, and to procure the enactment of such legislation as may be of advantage to the municipalities of the province.

(2) To take united action on all matters where the interests of Housing Commissions of municipalities may be affected, and generally to promote their interests.

(3) REPRESENTATION.

Each Housing Commission in the Province, which has become a member, shall be entitled to send to the meetings of the Association two representatives such representatives to be members of a Local Housing Commission.

(4) MEETINGS.

The Association shall meet in the City of London, or at such other place as the executives may determine on the third Monday in January of each year, and oftener if need be, on the call of the Executive.

(5) Each representative present at any meeting of the Association shall be entitled to vote on all questions, and upon any question on which there is an equality of votes, the same shall be negatived.

(6) OFFICERS AND EXECUTIVE.

The officers of the Association shall consist of a President, a Vice-President, A Secretary-Treasurer, and there shall be an Executive Committee to consist of these officers and two other members. These members shall constitute a quorum of the Executive Committee.

(7) ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

The officers and members of the Executive Committee shall be elected at each annual meeting, and shall hold office until their successors are appointed. In case of a vacancy occuring by death, resignation, or otherwise, it may be filled by the Executive Committee.

11. That this Association wish to place on record its unbounded confidence in the Ontario Housing planeas adopted by the Ontario Government and would urgently press upon the Government the necessity of continuing the plan so that Municipalities who wish to take advantage of the act, may do so, We would also urge upon the Government the advisability of increasing the limits that is to say on a frame dwelling $3,500, Birch Veneered $4,000, and solid birch $4,500.

The report is considered clause by clause.

Clause 1 being read, and adoption moved, Mr. Dennis, seconded by Mr. Gundy, moves in amendment, that the clause be amended by striking out the word " Commission."

The amendment is not adopted.

The clause as submitted is adopted.

Clauses (2),(3),(4),(5),(6) and (7) being read,are, upon motion, adopted.

Clause 11. being read, is, upon motion, adopted.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS.

Mr. Dennis of London, is elected President unanimously.

Mr. Gundy of Windsor is elected Vice President unanimously.

Mr. S.Baker City Clerk, is elected Secretary-Treasurer unanimously.

Messrs. C.H.Denton Tillsonburg, and C.E.Clements of Chatham are unanimously elected members of the Executive.

ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE.

Various phases of Housing matters are discussed.

The Secretary is instructed to arrange with the Government for a hearing of the deputation of Municipalities interested.

The question of assistance for the construction of duplex houses is suggested.

Some method of securing co-operative buying is suggested for study by the Executive.

The preparation of suitable plans for general use by the several Housing Commissions is suggested.

Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Cunliffe,moves, and it is adopted, that the Secretary-Treasurer be authorized to invite co-operation of other municipalities and to urge membership in the Association.

The meeting then adjourned.

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Chairman.